



CHESTER CITY
GATEWAY

STRATEGIC
REGENERATION FRAMEWORK

Volume 1: Regeneration Vision

2023

FOREWORD

Chester is proud of its **history** and confident about its **future**. Chester benefits from a **strong economy, unique heritage assets, world-class tourist attractions** and is a **regional gateway** and economic driver to **North Wales, Merseyside** and the **North West**. Chester is a great place to live, do business and study.

Chester City Gateway is a key part of the City's transformation. Chester attracts 36 million visitors each year, many of whom arrive at Chester Railway Station before onward travel to world-class tourist attractions and into the City's primary shopping streets. The Railway Station is also a key connector to the wider Cheshire, North Wales and Merseyside area, and beyond, with many residents and businesses reliant on the railway network to connect into other principal towns and cities. Nearly 5 million passengers use Chester Railway Station each year.

The location of the Gateway links existing residential communities to the north, such as Hoole, Newton and Upton, with Chester City Centre, and has an ability to become a destination in its own right, with the potential to create a thriving new hub for Chester, complete with new independent retailers and eateries alongside high-quality offices at City Place and new homes. Importantly the success of the Gateway will be measured on its ability to draw new people into the City Centre, to want to live and work in Chester, and encourage more footfall and vibrancy into the heart of the primary shopping area.

The Gateway is a key project, which, once delivered will build upon the achievement of Chester's One City Plan's significant investment of over £222 million in regeneration projects from public and private sectors.

We are working with LCR who are a UK Government-owned company which specialises in railway-led regeneration, and have a clear mandate to support the drive to deliver new homes, jobs and public value, and the levelling up of the economy.

LCR's success stories include the exemplary transformation around Kings Cross in London and the redevelopment of the long derelict Mayfield Depot in Manchester, which includes a new urban park.

This SRF presents a strong vision for the Gateway, recognising the untapped potential that this part of Chester can deliver and unlock, not only supporting the resurgence of the Gateway, but also its potential in regenerating the wider City Centre and Chester's local economy.

We recognise that it will take time to deliver our ambition and that the Council cannot deliver this alone. We will need to work in partnership with key landowners and stakeholders in the Gateway to ensure its success. This SRF provides a tool in which to attract new investment into Chester, as well as set out the Council's position and aspirations on development and design standards that we want to see come forward.

This SRF is a critical first step on the journey to transform the Chester City Gateway. It will raise the profile of this part of Chester, it will support public funding bids, and will give confidence and planning certainty to private sector investors and developers.



Councillor Louise Gittins
Leader, Cheshire West and Chester Council



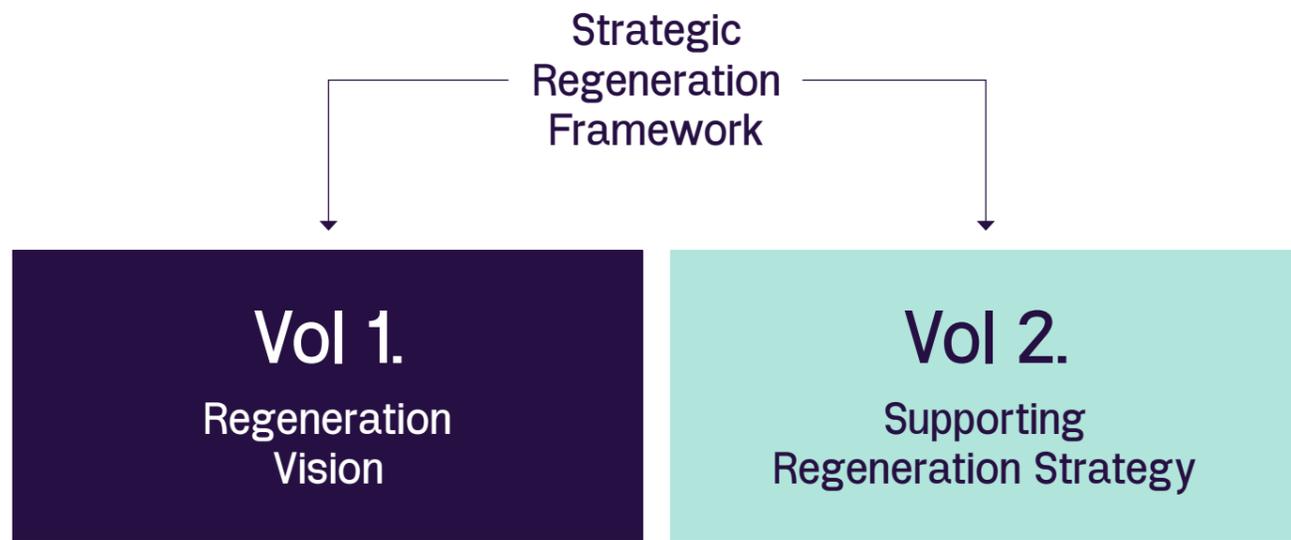
Peter Hawthorne
Chief Executive, London and Continental Railways Ltd (LCR)



INTRODUCTION

The **Chester City Gateway Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF)** sets out a **10 year vision** for the area around the **Grade II* Listed Chester Railway Station**, including potential development and new infrastructure opportunities which will **support the regeneration** of a key part of Chester City Centre.

This SRF is formed of two parts:



✧ **Volume 1** - sets out the strategic vision, key moves and overarching principles for Chester City Gateway, which will be used to inform landowners of the proposed uses and attract new investment to the area.

✧ **Volume 2** - provides more information and detail on these principles and outlines specific regeneration opportunities referred to as 'Places'.

Chester City Gateway must respond to the opportunity to create a new connected and sustainable City Centre community to support the vibrancy of the City Centre. Developing the Gateway will help to improve the perceptions of Chester by visitors and investors, given that the Gateway is one of the main arrival points into the City. The SRF provides the opportunity to advance regeneration, and deliver new homes, jobs, community assets, public realm, and transport improvements.

The SRF is the first stage of the development process – it presents a clear vision, objectives and design principles for the area around Chester Railway Station, helping to attract new investment into the City. It will help support future funding bids and be a tool for the Council to use in determining future planning applications coming forward in the area.

The aim is for Chester City Gateway to build upon key opportunities which are already planned, for example the proposed improvements to Chester Railway Station, as well as identify the potential for further change which could be delivered subject to funding and investment being secured. There are also key sites that could be delivered in the short-term and are not reliant on new infrastructure to come forward.

The Council and public sector partners will support and facilitate development coming forward within the Gateway and help to unlock key infrastructure projects. A key role will be to seek external investment, recognising the importance of the new infrastructure for the betterment of the Gateway as a whole.

The SRF proposes:



600+
new homes



Active

ground floor uses

providing new independent retail, food and beverage outlets and community uses



New high quality

public realm

including an enhanced Station Square



Improvements to Chester

Railway Station

including enhancing the concourse and consolidating car parking into a new mobility hub



New active

travel routes

for walking and cycling, better connecting the Gateway into the City Centre



High-quality greening, including planting of

new trees

and opportunities for Biodiversity Net Gain.



Enhanced

business opportunities

and workspaces



Vision

“ Together, we will create a beautiful Gateway to the **City Centre**, where residents and visitors can easily reach all that **Chester** and its Cheshire region have to offer. Underpinned by the Gateway’s **heritage** and its **excellent transport connectivity**, new infrastructure investment and development will transform underutilised brownfield land for public benefit.

The Gateway will comprise:



A highly-accessible central hub for the City, focused around Chester Railway Station, that encourages sustainable movement and enhances the experience of the city for residents and visitors alike



A network of people-friendly routes and spaces that promote walking and cycling and the use of public transport for regional and national travel



Community facilities and distinctive commercial uses that stimulate independence and vibrancy



Making better use of brownfield land to create liveable and integrated neighbourhoods including new homes that support healthy living, working and culture



The highest standards of sustainable design and biodiversity to contribute to Chester’s Net Zero-Carbon ambitions ”



Objectives

The Vision is underpinned by a series of guiding objectives:

01

Deliver a **modern and attractive Gateway** into the **City Centre** and the wider region (**Cheshire, North Wales, and the North of England**)

02

Address key constraints within **the Gateway**, including making **Hoole Bridge** a much better pedestrian-focused and cycle crossing

03

Create an **integrated transport hub** with a world-class Railway Station, and from which it is easy to travel by **bus, walking** and **cycling**

04

Promote new inclusive and **accessible routes** and **public spaces** that encourage **active travel** and provide new places for the **community** and **visitors** to enjoy

05

Provide beautiful and characterful **architecture** and **placemaking**

06

Deliver a mix of **over 600**, well-designed new homes, aimed at encouraging young professionals into the City Centre

07

Achieve appropriate densities that take full advantage of the Gateway’s excellent **transport connectivity** and promote the more efficient use of land at this key, **regional transport hub**

08

Take account of the Gateway’s **history** and celebrate and enhance designated **heritage** assets

09

Integrate **new development** sensitively with existing communities

10

Achieve the highest standards of **sustainable design** and **biodiversity** net gain

DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

The Gateway presents a **major opportunity to bring forward mixed-use regeneration and economic growth to Chester**. The poor configuration of the existing Railway Station and surrounding road network is uninspiring and heavily congested, creating **barriers to movement** and a poor environment for people living, working and visiting the area. **Redevelopment** around the area can help to mitigate these transport-led issues and create a **vibrant and popular destination for business, living and tourism**.

The SRF is a bold and transformational vision that forms a vital part of Chester's future. The study area is an integral part of the City Centre and has the potential to become a new sustainable residential quarter within Chester, a key project of the One City Plan.

The refreshed One City Plan is based upon 4 key themes (these are outlined below). These themes represent the foundations on which the new plan is built. In order to ensure that this SRF is aligned with the ambitions of the One City Plan, the proposed drivers for change have been assessed against the 4 themes of the refreshed Plan.



Four Themes of the Refreshed One City Plan

SUSTAINABILITY



CITY EXPERIENCE & PLAY



CONNECTIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY



THRIVING PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES



BUSINESS FRIENDLY ECONOMY & SKILLS

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Creating a new Gateway into Chester



The opportunity for transformational change



A need to provide new high-quality housing to meet local needs



An opportunity to provide a viable live/work balance



Creating strong amenity



The role of the Railway Station in unlocking growth



Promoting the more efficient use of land



Improving sustainable connections



Delivering economic growth



Complementing the wider regeneration of Chester



Hoole Bridge access staircase to Brook Street north



Chester Railway Station



Residential development by Shropshire Union Canal



Limited space for pedestrians and cyclists on Hoole Bridge



KEY MOVES

The following **key moves** are proposed which underpin development coming forward within **the Gateway**.



1 / An improved Chester Railway Station experience



2 / Supporting greater accessibility



3 / Consolidating and improving car parking



4 / Delivering high-quality place-making and public realm



5 / Meeting local housing need





KEY MOVES

1 / AN IMPROVED CHESTER RAILWAY EXPERIENCE



Chester Railway Station marks the arrival into Chester and acts as the **key strategic transport asset** for the City and sub-region. An overarching ambition of the SRF is to **create an improved Chester Railway Station experience and an enhanced Gateway into the City**, through:

Railway Station improvements

Transport for Wales have committed £7.5million of funding to enhance the concourse and improve customer facilities within the Station including the relocation of the gate lines, proposed changing places WC, Ticket Serving Counter, customer facilities refurbishments/replacement, CIS screens, signage, Water Refill Unit and CCTV upgrades.

Funding for more strategic improvements is being sought from the Department for Transport and include an additional northern platform, a new railway junction, and electrification of the line.

Station Square public realm

Enhancements to the Station Square public realm include increasing the size of the public realm

for use by pedestrians and cyclists. There is scope to improve the setting of the Grade II* Listed Railway Station building and re-introduce a visual appreciation of its impressive length as it was originally intended, by removing street clutter and including landscaping. A new statue of Thomas Brassey will be located in a prominent location by the station's entrance as a new focal point within the public realm.

Bus Stops

Additional bus stops are also proposed around Station Square to improve access to the Railway Station, which would also link to the planned bus priority package along Hoole Way.

The location of the additional bus stops will be agreed with bus service operators and the Council to ensure the space is used as efficiently as possible.



Chester Railway Station potential improvements



KEY MOVES

2 / SUPPORTING GREATER ACCESSIBILITY



Accessibility by sustainable modes of transport across the Gateway, such as taking a bus, cycling, e-transport, or walking, **needs to be prioritised and encouraged**, whilst also providing for those who must drive, such as vulnerable users, people who live in more remote locations, and those that travel at times when public transport is not readily available.

Hoole Bridge

The existing Hoole Bridge is a particular problem for pedestrians and cyclists due to narrow pavements, lack of a segregated cycle lane, and high levels of traffic creating a poor environment for walking and cycling. Options for a future replacement bridge have been undertaken and the preferred option is to construct a new high-quality pedestrian and cycle bridge in addition to the existing road bridge. There is also potential for it to be landscaped to create a new green link which runs through the Gateway. The design of the new bridge structure will be developed separately to the SRF, once funding has been secured.

Improved cycling and walking

The long-term vision is to reduce private vehicle use across the Gateway, which would be brought forward

as a separate comprehensive transport strategy for the wider area. This would enable wider pavements and segregated cycle lanes to promote walking and cycling and create more space for public realm, segregated cycle lanes, trees, pocket parks, and planting.

New Mobility Hub

To provide an integrated transport hub which would deliver 160 cycle spaces; cycle repair centre; hire for bikes, e-scooters and e-bikes; a new pick-up and drop-off facility; more blue-badge parking spaces; a dedicated short stay drop off facility; and a new taxi rank. The preferred site for the Mobility Hub is on the existing NCP Chester Station West Car Park. The design and location of the proposed Mobility Hub will be subject to further detailed work (based on the Network Rail Design Manual on Parking and Mobility at Stations) and a wider transport strategy which will be brought forward separately to this SRF.



Visual of potential new pedestrian and cycle Hoole bridge

KEY MOVES

3 / CONSOLIDATING AND IMPROVING CAR PARKING

The Gateway includes a **large amount of surface car parks**, which detract from the street frontages and create a **perception of a lack of safety** for pedestrians and cyclists. The current car parking provision **does not fulfil its role**. Existing car parking provision is **land hungry, poorly located and poorly sign posted**. It **detracts from the character of the Gateway** as well as the role that Chester Railway Station performs as a regional transport hub.

There will always be a requirement for private vehicle access at railway stations, whether this be for drop-off, blue badge parking, and long stay provision. Forecasts suggest an increase in rail passengers over coming years. Therefore, it is essential that there is sufficient high-quality car parking that is reflective of the quality of Chester Railway Station and the train services it connects with.

A range of locations have been considered for a new multi-storey car park to service the Railway Station. This needs to be carefully considered across the Gateway and will be informed by a separate comprehensive transport strategy. A potential location for this could be on the existing Chester Station West NCP above the proposed Mobility Hub as this could provide:

- * immediate access to the concourse;
- * the potential to connect to the proposed new Mobility Hub (see Key Move 2 above);
- * the potential for direct access from the proposed new pedestrian and cycle Hoole Bridge; and
- * should car parking demand decrease, the car parking element of the Mobility Hub will be designed with flexibility to be converted into other uses (for example office/ leisure).

This would need to be considered carefully from a design context and all opportunities within the Gateway explored.

Alongside any proposal for a new car park, the Council will consider the merits of a resident car parking scheme to restrict parking to those that live in the area. This will be informed by a separate comprehensive transport strategy.

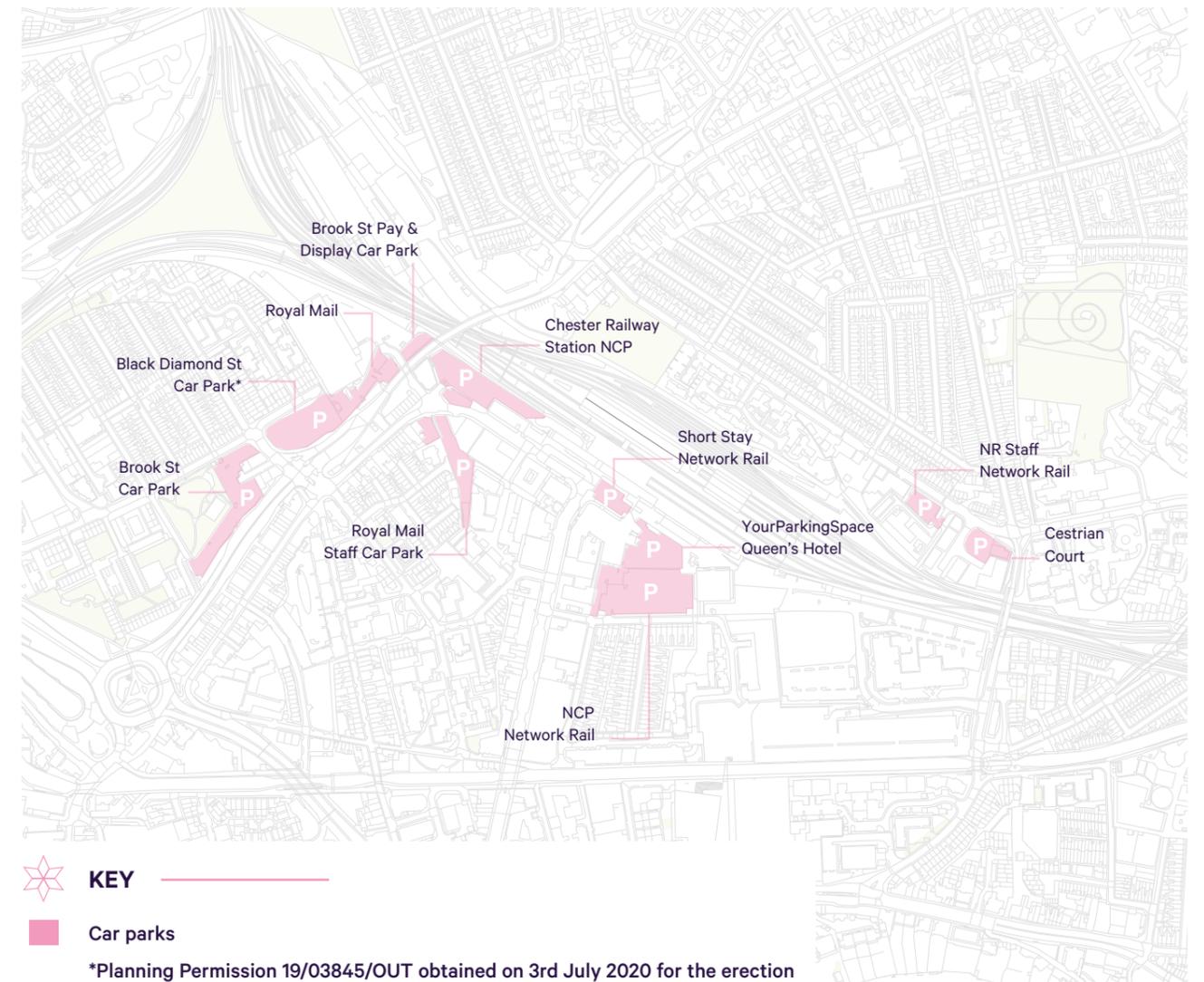


Surface car parking



Limited connection / accessibility from Hoole Bridge to Railway Station

Existing public and private car parks dispersed across the Gateway



KEY

Car parks

*Planning Permission 19/03845/OUT obtained on 3rd July 2020 for the erection of 244 bed Hotel (Class C1) over 7 storeys on the Black Diamond Car Park site.

648 publicly available car parking spaces across the Gateway within 6 public pay and display car parks.

251 car parking spaces dedicated to Chester Railway Station.



KEY MOVES

4 / DELIVERING HIGH-QUALITY PLACE-MAKING & PUBLIC REALM



The Gateway contains a range of **different urban settings and distinct character areas**, ranging from the formal City Road Boulevard, the varied and intimate quality of Brook Street, the large waterside warehouses and industrial buildings, to the grid patterned two-storey terraces which comprise the successful ‘village-like’ qualities of Hoole. There is an **opportunity to improve, promote and enhance the Gateway’s unique qualities** to encourage footfall, increase dwell time, and promote the Gateway as a place **people choose to live, spend time or work**.

Existing heritage assets

Any future development must recognise the importance and contribution that heritage buildings and features make towards the character and uniqueness of the Gateway. The conservation and enhancement of these assets will be promoted across the Gateway.

Active frontages

Ground floor active uses will be encouraged to promote vibrancy and footfall throughout the day and evening, particularly along Station Road, Brook Street north, City Road and the Bars roundabout. In the short-term, there is the opportunity to activate underused sites and empty shop fronts through the use of ‘meanwhile’ uses, until an appropriate development or tenant infills the space, which complements the existing offer and supports existing local businesses.

Way-finding

An improved clear legible wayfinding strategy will be introduced across the Gateway, to direct pedestrians and cyclists. This will be informed by a separate Movement Strategy, setting out the improved pedestrian and cycle links (including crossings) across the Gateway.

Public Art and Play

New areas of public realm should consider the inclusion of public art and informal / formal play spaces in both physical and digital form. This will attract families into the Gateway and wider area. Suitably located benches will also be provided throughout areas of public realm, encouraging greater dwell-time.

Public Realm

Six landscape strands have been identified within the Gateway:

- ✧ **City Road Boulevard** – reimagined as Chester’s longest park with a tree lined boulevard, rain gardens and parklets;
- ✧ **Hoole Way Landscapes** – creation of a green corridor;
- ✧ **Station Square** – enhancing the Railway Station forecourt to create a landscaped space aimed at social interaction and activity;
- ✧ **Re-finding the Flookersbrook** – to reflect the presence of the culverted watercourse;
- ✧ **Shropshire Union Canal** – introduce pockets of waterside landscape and planted pontoons; and,
- ✧ **Lightfoot Street** – street tree planting and on street rain gardens.





KEY MOVES

5 / MEETING LOCAL HOUSING NEED



There is a **need for new homes** within the Gateway to meet local housing need and provide a **range of tenures and house types**. The existing housing stock needs to be diversified and expanded further to meet the needs of young professionals and attract new families into Chester, maximising the opportunity for people to **live close to a key public transport hub**. At the same time, it is important to ensure the Gateway caters for the more vulnerable groups.

The Gateway is on the edge of the City Centre boundary with direct access to the jobs and services that the City Centre has to offer within a 15-minute travel time. New residential development within the Gateway will also play an important role in bringing more people into the City Centre and increasing footfall at all times of day and into the evening to ensure the vitality and vibrancy of centres.

- * **Mix of Housing Types** – a range of house and apartment sizes; homes adapted for people with disabilities; care leavers accommodation; affordable housing; and Build to Rent accommodation, would be found acceptable in the Gateway.
- * **Supported Accommodation** - the Gateway provides the opportunity to accommodate more specialist accommodation to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. There is potential for new supported accommodation to be accommodated within the Northgate Links 'Place', at Trafford Street.



Precedent Image: The Mailings, Ouseburn.
Source: Jill Tate Photography.



Precedent Image: Claredale Street, Bethnal Green – showing successful low-rise residential infill development and greening of the street. **Source:** KCA.

The **City Centre ward** comprises mostly **16-44 year olds (59%)**, with comparatively few **0-15 year olds (8%)**, and a **moderate number of 65+ year olds (14%)**. Few families are residing in the City Centre. Most likely, 17-35 year olds are the dominant age bracket, given the **significant student population (16%)** compared to the Borough (4.4%) and England (5.8%).

Assessing the Residential Demand

The Gateway can deliver housing to a diverse demographic range. Understanding the affordability of the occupiers will inform the types of housing to be developed.

Demographic	Key Drivers	Type of Residential Product
Over 55's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Local outdoor space * Local amenities * Access to public transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Comfortable apartments * Low maintenance outdoor space * Central location
Empty Nesters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Quality to reinvest their money * Space for grandchildren * Garden / balconies * Walking and cycling provisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * High quality apartments * 2/3 bedroom townhouses with outdoor amenity space (garden) * Car parking
Young Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Good schools / child care * Amenities (parks and entertainment) * Friendly neighbourhood * Local cycling routes * Good access to work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Sizeable homes * Townhouses * (Semi) Detached dwellings * Gardens * Car parking
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Access to their home towns * Proximity to university * Nightlife and leisure * Affordable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Sizeable homes * Townhouses * (Semi) Detached dwellings
Aspiring Home-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Value for money * Neighbourhoods * Good access to work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Apartments / smaller houses * Affordable housing
Renters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Improved product to what it available * Creates a community * City centre living with amenity access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Apartments * Housing



ILLUSTRATIVE
MASTERPLAN



The SRF area is defined by eight 'Places' which have formed the basis for the development of the Illustrative Masterplan.

- ✧ 1/ STATION SQUARE

- ✧ 2/ QUEENS ROAD

- ✧ 3/ HOOLE WAY EDGE
(Royal Mail, Black Diamond Street, and St Anne's Field)

- ✧ 4/ FLOOKERSBROOK

- ✧ 5/ LIGHTFOOT STREET WEST

- ✧ 6/ LIGHTFOOT STREET EAST

- ✧ 7/ NORTHGATE LINKS
(Trafford Street)

- ✧ 8/ CHARTERHALL

 ILLUSTRATIVE VISION



DELIVERY AND IMPLEMENTATION



Delivery Partners

The key delivery partners for Chester City Gateway include Cheshire West and Chester Council, Network Rail who will be supported by LCR as well as individual landowners within the Gateway. For more information on the Delivery Partners, please refer to Volume 2 of the SRF.

Delivery Strategy

As the SRF is intended to be flexible to respond to changing market conditions, developer and investor interest and key projects could be accelerated with the recipient of new funding streams. As outlined within Volume 2 of the plan, there are a series of standalone development opportunities ("Places") which are not reliant on key infrastructure moves to come forward. These sites will be developed in accordance with the SRF but will be the responsibility of individual landowners to bring development parcels forward.

Infrastructure Requirements

Infrastructure will be key to unlock development opportunities and realise the vision and objectives for the SRF. This will require strong collaboration with partners.

Whilst the public-sector will be preparing funding bids to secure some funding of key infrastructure, there will also be a requirement to secure Section 106 contributions from landowners within the Gateway. The timing of the delivery of the infrastructure will be dependent on receipt of funding for the specific projects.

Funding the Delivery of Infrastructure

The scale of infrastructure required to unlock the development of the Gateway will need significant funding from a range of sources. This is likely to be a combination of transport related funding streams for example infrastructure growth fund, as well as the opportunity to use developer contributions.



Proposed History Centre





11 — DELIVERY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Delivery Strategy



KEY

History Centre - Planning permission has been granted for the new History Centre with construction work expected to commence in Autumn 2023, with completion by winter 2024/25.

Chester Railway Station - planned improvements to Railway Station delivered by Transport for Wales.

Residential Developments - landowners and developers to promote and deliver new homes on the following sites:

✧ **Land immediately available for development:**

1. Flookersbrook
2. Lightfoot Street West (the land adjacent to History Centre)
3. Northgate Links
4. Black Diamond Street
**Planning Permission 19/03845/OUT obtained on 3rd July 2020 for the erection of 244 bed Hotel (Class C1) over 7 storeys on the Black Diamond Car Park site.
5. Charterhall Drive

✧ **Land to become available subject to the parking strategy:**

6. Queens Road Car Park
7. St Annes Car Park

✧ **Land to become available subject to the consolidation of existing businesses:**

8. Lightfoot Street West (builders yard)
9. Lightfoot Street East
*Opportunity for consolidation of businesses within this site to open up brownfield land for residential development fronting Lightfoot Street.

TO BE DELIVERED SUBJECT TO FUNDING:

Car Parking Strategy - to be developed across the Gateway to inform approach for consolidation and managing on-street car parking.

Mobility Hub - will be located on the site of the NCP Chester Station West car park. The delivery of the Mobility Hub would be subject to a Business Case and funding. This site may also include additional parking but this would be dependent on the outcome of the car parking strategy.

Hoole Bridge - the delivery of Hoole Bridge additional active travel bridge will be subject to a Business Case and funding.

Westminster Bridge - the delivery of an upgraded or new bridge structure at this location will be subject to a separate Business Case and funding.

Public Realm Improvements - to be delivered subject to a separate comprehensive wider transport strategy:

- ✧ City Road
- ✧ Black Diamond Street Junction
- ✧ Brook Street
- ✧ Link to Millennium Greenway
- ✧ The Bars





Public Consultation

This SRF has been subject to stakeholder engagement with the local community groups, key land owners and statutory consultees. Public consultation ran from **6th January to 3rd February 2023**.

The amendments to text and plans have been made throughout the document and are detailed within the supporting Statement of Consultation which accompanies this SRF.

Monitoring and Review

This SRF provides development partners, landowners, developers and the local community with a proposed vision for the creation of a successful Gateway. The masterplan which accompanies this document is illustrative only and the document is intended to be flexible to respond to changing market conditions over time. The SRF will be monitored, and formal reviews undertaken when appropriate.





LCR

